

# Forest Industry's Faller Certification Begins New Stage

**BC**'s forest industry is stepping up its approach to ensuring all fallers are working safely on the job. The BC Forest Safety Council is launching a long-expected annual renewal fee system for the province's 3,618 certified fallers as well as piloting a re-evaluation system that will assess the skills of fallers and provide them with an opportunity to raise certification levels at least once every three years.

The safety of fallers working in BC's forests took centre stage in 2005 when 43 forest workers, seven of them fallers, died while on the job. The tragic death of veteran faller Ted Gramlich that year and the subsequent coroner's inquest further highlighted the need for ongoing training and supervision to maintain safe work practices.

"We want to honour Ted and other fallers who have lost their lives by keeping all forest workers as safe as possible on the job," says Bill Bolton, senior advisor with the Council's Forest Worker Development program. "For two years, no certified fallers in BC have died while working in the woods, and this may be the most important legacy of the certification program and that of fallers like Ted Gramlich who died in November 2005 and Bob Strang who was the last faller to lose his life in December."



Bolton explained that certification is a requirement to work as a faller in BC as set by WorkSafeBC regulations and licences and employers are responsible for ensuring that certifications are current.

"The approach to faller certification renewals is similar to that for driver's licenses which requires renewal fees while qualifying individuals for certain driving situations," says Bolton. "But we're going beyond that and taking it one step further by introducing formal on-site re-evaluation of the work practices of certified fallers."

The re-evaluation will take place at least once every three years and will assure that the faller's skills continue to meet the existing BC Faller Training Standard. Those fallers with appropriate work habits will also be able to increase the certification level to work on steeper slopes and larger tree diameters. The

re-evaluation program will be piloted in 2008 with the expectation to be fully operational and mandatory starting in 2009.

"The bottom line is we want all our workers to be safe in the woods," says Mike McKibbin, Western Fallers Association executive director. "Faller certification helps us ensure workers have the skills and knowledge to do the job safely and successful re-evaluation will provide fallers with an opportunity to demonstrate their abilities and professionalism."

Council-trained faller supervisors or bull-buckers working on site will be able to conduct the re-evaluations. Alternatively, qualified supervisor trainers (QSTs) who have also been trained by the Council can be contracted for a fee to conduct the re-evaluation. The faller renewal fees that begin in January will cover program administration and quality assurance costs.

The renewal fee structure will apply to all faller certifications expiring in 2008 and beyond. Fallers will be required to pay \$150 annually to renew their certifications. Fees are reduced to \$100 if a faller is registered in the independent category of the Council's SAFE Companies program.

Fallers can find out about their renewals by phoning 1 877-741-1060 or emailing [training@bcforestsafesafe.org](mailto:training@bcforestsafesafe.org). To find out more information about the BC Forest Safety Council and its programs visit their web site at [www.bcforestsafesafe.org](http://www.bcforestsafesafe.org).

The BC Forest Safety Council is a not-for-profit society dedicated to promoting forest health and safety. It was founded and is supported by all major forestry organizations in BC and works with forestry employers, workers, contractors and the provincial government and agencies to implement changes necessary to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries in the forest sector. ■

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## A Legacy For Ted Gramlich

By Tanner Elton, CEO  
BC Forest Safety Council

As Council staff reviewed injury and fatality reports in late November, we noted that it was two years to the day since veteran faller Ted "Turbo" Gramlich had died.

His death was one of 43 forestry fatalities in 2005, seven of them fallers. It drew much public attention, and prompted the first coroner's Inquest into a forest worker's death in recent memory.

Since then, more has been said and done about forestry safety than in the previous decade.

Safety is now front and center. Hundreds of companies have become SAFE-certified, and large and small efforts throughout industry are focusing on this critical issue.

In the past two years, we have also seen more than 3,600 fallers become certified. And next year starts a new phase with the review and renewal of certifications.

All that represents a dramatic shift, one that pays clear dividends including far fewer incidents. In fact, no B.C. faller has died on the job in nearly two years, and this may be the most important legacy of Ted and others who have lost their lives in the working woods.

The industry is learning from experience, no longer accepts injuries and fatalities as inevitable and stands committed as never before to the safety of workers. ■

*Tanner Elton is CEO of the BC Forest Safety Council. For more information on faller certification and other forest safety initiatives, go to [www.bcforestsafesafe.org](http://www.bcforestsafesafe.org).*